

**The Washington State Transportation Plan
The Role of Public Transportation
Presented By
Washington State Transit Association
and
Community Transportation Association of the Northwest
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Introduction

The role of public transportation in Washington State's overall transportation system and the State's role in funding public transportation has undergone significant change over the past three decades. In the early 1970's the need for increased public transportation service was recognized as was the need for a strong state role in the provision and funding of service. In 1974, legislation authorizing the formation of Public Transportation Benefit Areas (PTBAs) was passed by the Legislature. This legislation provided a matching level of funds through the Motor Vehicle Excise Tax to areas that formed public transit agencies and levied a local option sales tax.

This partnership between the State and local governments resulted in the formation of 26 local and regional public transportation systems – 19 PTBAs, 3 City systems, 2 county system and 1 Unincorporated Transit Benefit Area. Sound Transit is a Regional Transit Authority. This partnership led to Washington having one of the best networks of public transportation systems in the nation. Washington's rural transportation systems are national models and the small urban systems are recognized as having levels of transit ridership and service comparable to that of much larger communities in the rest of the nation.

In 2000 this partnership came to a sudden end with the passage of I-695 and subsequent legislative action. While many parts of government saw the loss of revenue with the elimination of the Motor Vehicle Excise Tax (MVET), public transportation systems lost approximately 40% of their revenue.

Today, we find ourselves at a crossroads. 15 of the 26 public transportation systems in Washington have asked voters for additional local sales tax funding and 14 have been successful. C-Tran, in Vancouver, and Twin Transit, in Lewis County, will be on the ballot in November 2004. However, 2/3 of the rural systems have not been able to replace lost MVET funding due to local economic conditions. And those successful local transit systems have merely maintained a status quo level of funding while stretching the ability of local communities to fund public transportation services. Since the elimination of MVET funding, the State of Washington has done little to reestablish itself

as a partner in ensuring public transportation fulfills its essential role in the total transportation system, reducing congestion and in providing basic mobility and access to all citizens of Washington.

In this paper we will examine the role public transportation can play to advance the goals of the Washington State Department of Transportation and the Transportation Commission. Using the framework of the Washington Transportation Plan, we will discuss state actions and support needed in **each of the nine key issue areas identified by the Commission.**

How can transportation serve our economy's productivity, our communities' livability, our ecosystem's viability, and our citizens' convenience?

This question is the theme of the Washington Transportation Plan. We believe a large part of the answer to this question is, ***by expanding the availability of public transportation to all citizens of the State of Washington.*** We also believe that achieving this will require a reestablishment of the partnership between the State of Washington and local governments. Where public transit agencies exist in the state, local governments have stepped up by increasing local sales taxes. However, this is not enough. In King County alone, the cost of implementing the 40% service increase called for in regional plans by 2010 exceeds projected revenues by \$700 million spread over the next six years. The time is right for the State of Washington to determine its role in this partnership.

The Washington State Transit Association offers the following set of principles that guide its approach to each of the issue areas.

- A. The citizens of Washington require mobility for a thriving economy and the State should work in partnership with local governments and transit agencies to provide a strong transportation system including highways, public transportation, rail, ferries, and aviation.**
- B. All citizens of Washington should have access to basic transportation services that enhance their quality of life**
- C. The citizens of Washington require an efficient transportation system and public transportation that complements and enhances the efficiency of the highway system.**

In this paper each of the nine issue areas is addressed. The area of "Transportation Access" is addressed near the end and differently from the other 8 areas. This issue is

central to the need for public transportation services in all areas of our State and clearly illustrates the need for a State role and partnership.

A clear case can be made that transit plays a role addressing almost every WTP issue area. Prior to the elimination of MVET, the state role was clear – by matching locally generated revenues, the state leveraged the effectiveness of local investments. The state has also played a long-standing role in providing transit-supportive capital facilities including HOV lanes and park and rides lots, and in obtaining and channeling federal funds available for transit purposes. This arrangement resulted in stable and growing funding for transit, compared to other states.

We believe there is still a rationale for state support of local transit, despite the repeal of the MVET. Ideally state funding to match local revenues, as the MVET once did, would be restored. Barring that, we feel there are specific roles the State of Washington should assume:

- Funding that helps communities address the basic access needs for all residents of Washington
- Capital funding to help preserve vehicle fleets and infrastructure necessary to maintain and expand transit service
- Capital funding to build and preserve HOV lanes and park and ride lots
- Funding for intercity buses and services that cross transit agency boundaries
- Funding to support commute trip reduction and ridesharing

These areas are discussed in detail below.

AREA 1: SYSTEM PRESERVATION

What will it take to make sure the elements of the transportation system we take for granted today will still be in place when we need them in two, six, or twenty years?

The WSDOT staff's presentation on Transportation System Preservation made three points that particularly applies to the preservation of public transportation assets.

- Preservation investment needs tend to increase as the asset inventory grows older.
- Neglect or deferral of preservation investment leads to a compromise or loss of use of existing assets. This leads, in turn, to spiraling costs to retain or recapture existing facilities and capacity. This issue is particularly important for public transportation systems where deterioration of assets leads to loss of ridership. These riders often return to driving, increasing the burden on the highway system.
- Preservation investment is becoming more expensive and complicated as expectations increase for auxiliary environmental and safety retrofits on existing facilities and equipment.

In addition to these three factors, public transportation systems are faced with additional challenges to preserve existing levels of service.

Maintaining the current vehicle fleet and facilities. Washington's public transportation systems built the current vehicle fleets and infrastructure system during the period the State of Washington was an active funding partner. These fleets and infrastructure must be replaced or operating costs will rise and reliability will decline. Increasing complexity of systems, safety and security concerns, and technical advances to reduce emissions and increase reliability combine to increase the cost of replacing existing equipment.

Washington State transit systems currently operate 2709 buses, 948 paratransit vehicles, and 1940 vanpool vehicles. The average annual replacement cost (in 2004 dollars) is estimated at \$90,000,000. Total capital obligations for the state's public transportation systems (excluding Sound Transit) for vehicles, facilities, and capital equipment were \$250,000,000 in 2003. Federal capital funding was \$87,000,000 or 35% of the total.

Maintaining current service levels requires an increased investment. Replacing the current capital facilities in a timely manner does not allow transit systems to maintain current service levels. Several factors result in the need for additional capital and operations investments to maintain current levels of service:

- Increased congestion means increased vehicles and service hours are needed to maintain current service levels.
- Competition for street space is making provision of bus shelters, benches, and bus zones more expensive.
- The changing operating environment requires expanded safety and security measures (Cameras on buses and at facilities, controlled access to facilities, etc.) that are increasing capital and operating costs.

Keeping service levels on pace with population growth. The population of Washington is expected to grow almost 30% to almost 8 million people by 2025. Keeping pace with this growth in population will require, at the minimum, a similar growth in transit operations and capital facilities. The Texas Transportation Institute states that Very Large urban areas would have to increase transit trips by 20 percent to maintain a constant congestion level, Large urban areas by 50%, and Small and Medium urban areas by 75%.

Recommendation – The State Role in Preserving the Public Transportation System. It is an interest of the State of Washington to ensure that the capital resources of the state's public transportation systems are preserved and maintained. The vehicles, equipment, and facilities being replaced today were purchased during a period of substantial state participation in the funding of public transportation. This

partnership must be reestablished to ensure preservation and expansion of the public transportation system.

The State of Washington should establish a public transportation capital program to provide 20% of the capital costs of vehicle and other capital facilities. Estimated cost would be approximately \$50,000,000 per year. Achieving this level of funding will require new flexible revenues.

AREA 2: SYSTEM EFFICIENCIES

How can we best work toward optimizing how efficiently we derive the benefits of our current transportation system facilities and those we are able to create in the future?

We recommend an approach that acknowledges and adopts the following three approaches.

1. We cannot build our way out of congestion. When new capacity is added, traffic moves:
 - From other time periods to the peak
 - From other routes back toward the freeway
 - From transit and carpools back to single-occupancy vehicles (SOVs)
2. We should focus on the efficient movement of people (and freight), not just vehicles.
3. Transportation investments must take into consideration land use and land use impacts of added capacity.

However, congestion will worsen if we do not take action. In Washington, travel is up 91%, but lane miles increased by only 8% from 1980 to 2002. The statewide population of Washington is expected to increase by two million people to 8 million in 2025. This is estimated to generate 70 million more vehicle miles of travel per day, a 54% increase from 2003 to 2025. The Texas Transportation Institute found, "This analysis shows that it would be almost impossible to maintain a constant congestion level with road construction only."

Investments in public transportation service and infrastructure can be the most effective way to increase the "people carrying" efficiency of the total transportation system. The following facts illustrate the effectiveness public transportation investments.

- According to the Texas Transportation Institute's 2004 Urban Mobility Report, public transportation services in 2002 reduced the state's annual person-hours of delay by almost 31.6 million hours, or 22 hours per peak traveler. The value of those savings is estimated at \$571 million for 2002 alone.

- During weekday afternoon rush hours, the northbound HOV lane carries twice as many people per hour as the adjacent general person lanes. A majority of these people are on a bus (WSDOT, 2002).
- HOV lanes throughput 33% of the people in 18% of the vehicles during the PM directional peak at freeway monitoring locations in the Puget Sound area (WSDOT, 2004)

The following public transportation investments directly increase the efficiency of the transportation system.

- HOV Lanes.
- Park-and-Ride Lots
- Signal Preemption for Buses
- Express Bus Service
- Bus Rapid Transit
- Vanpool and Rideshare Programs
- Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) and Transportation Demand Management (TDM)

Recommendation: The State Role in Assisting Public Transportation should be to Increase the Efficiency of the Transportation System. It is a State interest to ensure the total transportation system operates as efficiently as possible. In many cases increased investments in public transportation and facilities that encourage use of high-occupancy vehicles is the most effective strategy.

The State of Washington should complete and expand the system of HOV lanes and facilities and invest in the preservation and expansion of Park-and-Ride facilities. This will require additional gas tax revenues. Expenditures for HOV lanes and Park-and-Ride facilities are eligible for gas tax funding.

The State of Washington should increase funding for Transit Demand Management and Commute Trip Reduction efforts. These investments should include:

- *Expansion of the CTR Performance Grant program from \$1.5 million to \$3 million per year.*
- *Continued support of the Vanpool Investment program. This program will purchase over 170 expansion vanpools in the current biennium increasing the number of vanpools in the state to over 1650.*
- *Expansion of the CTR program by tying together land use and transportation investments. It should be explicit state policy that CTR and TDM measures be part of any major state investment in a congested corridor. This should include funding for TDM-based construction mitigation.*
- *Increased funding for the B&O tax incentive for employers who provide transit passes, vanpool fares, and other transit subsidies. The tax incentive is severely underfunded. The state should adequately fund*

the B&O tax exemption for CTR expenses, or treat the exemption similarly to other tax exemptions that do not require offsetting funding.

The State of Washington should, as policy, require that all state segment-based and corridor-based projects incorporate transit and pedestrian elements in their plans, scopes of work, and budget. The State should set aside a minimum of 1% of the project budget for TDM efforts.

The State of Washington should provide flexible funding that allows expansion of public transportation services to maintain and improve the efficiency of the State highway system, particularly where HOV lanes and facilities are available and where services cross county or jurisdictional lines.

AREA 3: SAFETY

How do we make transportation systems and facilities throughout the state safer for their users?

Two sets of users must be considered in addressing the safety of our transportation system – vehicle drivers/passengers and pedestrians/bicyclists. Simply increasing public transportation usage increases the safety of the transportation system. The National Safety Council estimates that riding the bus is more than 170 times safer than automobile travel.

Public transportation also increases safety by providing choice. With the availability of public transportation, people with low incomes are not forced to operate unsafe vehicles or operate a vehicle without a license or insurance in order to obtain basic life necessities. Elderly persons, whose driving skills have diminished, are not forced to drive to obtain these necessities. Public transportation also provides a choice to those who drink – 40% of the people killed in vehicle accidents were involved in alcohol-related accidents.

An area of increasing concern is the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists, particularly at or near transit stops and facilities. A recent study by the University of Washington found a strong correlation between bus stop locations and pedestrian accidents. The study also showed a sharp increase in pedestrian accident rates when a lane of roadway is added. WSDOT, local governments, and transit systems must work together to provide a safe pedestrian environment and safe paths to transit facilities and transportation pickup points.

Recommendation: The State Role in Increasing Transportation System Safety. The State of Washington should partner with local governments and transit

systems to increase the availability and safety of pedestrian facilities. This is particularly important near public transportation facilities.

The State of Washington should build on its successful “Safe Paths to Schools” program and create a “Safe Paths to Transit” program. A modest grant-based program using gas tax revenue is proposed.

AREA 4: BOTTLENECKS AND CHOKEPOINTS

What opportunities for investment in new facility and system assets can help address system chokepoints and bottlenecks? What are the most effective near-term solutions though expanding capacity to move people and goods in shorter and more reliable times?

Often, the most effective and efficient solution to expand capacity in the short term is to increase public transportation services and capacities. This is particularly true when the bottleneck or chokepoint is caused by road construction or by natural barriers that are extremely expensive or environmentally prohibitive to overcome. Roadway construction or expansion creates a mobility challenge of its own. Maintaining mobility during major construction will require an unparalleled mitigation program, providing facilities to keep transit moving during construction, and added service and vehicles to handle additional loads. One of the most effective mitigation measures in corridors where both highway and transit investments are planned will be to coordinate the staging of construction projects to ensure that high capacity transit investments are completed before major highway construction begins.

Recommendation: The State Role in Addressing Bottlenecks and Chokepoints. The State should allocate mitigation funds to public transportation service improvements and TDM efforts as part of major highway construction projects.

The State of Washington Department of Transportation should adopt a policy of funding increased public transportation service and TDM efforts to mitigate highway construction impacts. This funding should be considered part of the cost of the project.

AREA 5: CONTRIBUTION TO THE ECONOMY AND GOOD JOBS

What investments in new facility and system assets can help support the state’s economic vitality and strengthen the job picture?

Investments in public transportation service and facilities have multiple positive impacts on the State’s economy and job picture. Investment in public transportation, particularly in operations, remains in the local economy and has a multiplier effect. A Los Angeles study found that \$.80 of every dollar spent on public transportation gets

re-circulated in the region and translates into \$3.80 of goods and services exchanged, whereas \$.85 of every \$1.00 spent on gasoline leaves the region.

Expenditures on public transportation also generate significant benefits in the form of increased mobility, reduced congestion, parking cost-savings, social program efficiencies, user cost-savings and others. The report, "Dollars and Sense; The Economic Case for Public Transportation in America", estimates a 3:1 or 4:1 benefit to cost ratio for public expenditures on public transportation.

Public transportation expenditures have also been shown to be an effective spur of economic development. "Twelve Anti-Transit Myths: A Conservative Critique", a study by the Free Congress Research and Education Foundation, found rail transit has consistently brought increased investment, higher property values, higher rents, and more customers. St. Louis and Dallas are two prime examples of relatively low-density urban areas that have seen investments in light rail spur economic development. Property near light rail stations is in demand and increasing in value. Middle and upper-middle class people are choosing to live in downtown Dallas or near a light rail station, revitalizing urban areas and decreasing vehicle travel in the region.

Finally, public transportation provides access to training, educational opportunities, and employment to those without travel alternatives. An estimated 94% of welfare recipients attempting to move into the workplace do not own cars and rely on public transportation (Source: Center for Transportation Excellence).

Recommendation: The State Role in Contributing to the Economy and Good Jobs.

The State of Washington should recognize the economic benefits, both direct and indirect, of investments in public transportation. The investments recommended in other sections of this paper that address specific issue areas would also generate significant economic benefits.

The State of Washington should increase its role as a partner in the funding of public transportation capital equipment and facilities and service. This funding should be targeted toward specific issue areas in the 2005-2007 biennium. The State of Washington should move toward providing stable and predictable flexible funding for public transportation service.

AREA 6: MOVING FREIGHT

How are the special needs of freight movement to be incorporated in the state's transportation plan?

The State of Washington should recognize that freight movement also benefits through expanded public transportation that allows more efficient movement of people. No specific public transportation recommendation is made to address this issue area.

AREA 7: HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT

How can transportation investments be developed, implemented, and used in ways that enhance our citizen's transportation goals as well as healthy communities and a well-protected environment at the same time?

Two issues have dominated recent discussion of the health and environmental effects of our transportation system:

- Global Warming
- The Negative Health Impacts of Sprawl

Transportation sources, mostly private owned automobiles, are responsible for over half of the six regulated air pollutants. There is also a strong consensus among scientists that the atmosphere is warming due to a century of sustained increases in carbon dioxide from the use of internal combustion engines. Unless this increase is dramatically slowed, significant alterations in the environment could occur with large negative effects on health, weather, and the economy. Public transportation systems have made significant improvements with the adoption of the use of natural gas, ultra-low sulfur diesel, and biodiesel and the introduction of efficient low-emission engine technologies, including hybrid engine technology. Improved technology and reduced driving are the two ways to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Public transportation plays a key role in the implementation of both of these strategies.

Recent studies have linked health status with suburban sprawl. A recent study in the journal "Public Health" found that rates of arthritis, asthma, headaches, and other health complaints increased with the degree of sprawl. Previous studies have linked sprawl to an increased risk of being overweight or obese and certain health problems such as high blood pressure. Some researchers have also speculated that the social isolation that occurs in sprawling communities may also lead to increased mental health problems. Definitive research on this issue has not been completed.

Recommendation: The State of Washington should encourage development that supports use of public transportation and transportation alternatives. Increased public transportation service reduces the environmental impacts of driving and encourages and supports increased walking, bicycling, and other healthy transportation modes. Increased public transportation service can also be used to encourage denser development that promotes walking and a healthier lifestyle.

The State of Washington should provide incentives, including funding, to encourage public transportation systems to adopt the use of cleaner fuels

and bio-fuels and to replace or retrofit older vehicles with efficient, low-emission vehicles and engines. A funding partnership between the state and local transportation systems should be established to address the current higher cost of alternative fuels and of low-emission technologies. The capital program recommended under the System Preservation issue also encourages transit systems to replace or upgrade older, higher-emission engines and vehicles.

AREA 8: TRANSPORTATION ACCESS—TRANSPORTATION FOR EVERYONE

What basic transportation services are indispensable for all citizens' societal engagement, and, how is a "safety net" for transportation needs to be provided for every citizen in every community?

The basic transportation services required by the citizens of Washington are those that provide access to necessities such as food and medical care and to activities that enhance the quality of life such as recreational, social, family, religious, and educational opportunities. For many Washingtonians, this must be transportation service provided by others – volunteers, human service agencies, or public transportation providers. The issue of access can be particularly acute in rural and suburban areas where public transportation is either severely limited or completely absent leaving our most vulnerable citizens isolated, both socially and economically.

Most residents of Washington meet their transportation needs by use of a private automobile. This includes many of those who do not drive themselves such as children and elderly persons with a spouse who is still able to drive. However, many Washingtonians do not have access to and/or the capability to drive an automobile. This population is referred to as "persons with special transportation needs".

"Persons with special transportation needs" are defined in RCW 81.66.010(4) as "those persons, including their personal attendants, who because of physical or mental disability, income status or age are unable to transport themselves or to purchase appropriate transportation." "Persons with special transportation needs" fall into four broad groups:

- **The elderly** – 11.2% of the population in 2000. National Highway Traffic statistics show that 17% of Washington's population over 65 does not drive. This population group will more than double by 2025 to 1,447,000 persons.
- **People with disabilities** – The 2000 Census indicates 17.5% of the population or over 981,000 persons report some type of disability. Over 103,000 individuals in Washington have a developmental disability. It is estimated that between 5 to 7% of the disabled population or between 60,000 and 100,000 individuals have a disability that would qualify them for ADA door-to-door transportation.
- **Children** – 25.7% of the population are under 18 – over 1,500,000 individuals. The State of Washington provides approximately 68% of the cost of home-to-

school-to-home transportation for students. Little other transportation funding is targeted toward youth and children. Children and youth in families with one or no automobile, particularly in suburban and rural areas, often have no access to extracurricular activities or to community and social services targeted toward at-risk children. The special transportation and education needs of infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and homeless children are being increasingly recognized. There are few transportation options for these children.

- **People with low incomes** – 10.6% of the population (or 650,000 people) have incomes below the poverty level. In some counties in Washington State, the number is more than double that figure. And there are many more who are nominally above the federal poverty level, but who have very limited resources that are insufficient to meet basic needs. For instance, the minimum family budget (defined as the income needed to adequately meet the basic necessities) is approximately twice the official U.S. poverty threshold as defined by the Bureau of Census. In 1998, the minimum family budget was \$26,000 for a family of three. This income level leaves little room for private transportation options. Low-income persons are often located in rural areas or in Tribal Nations where there are few, if any, public transportation options.

These groups are not an insignificant part of our population and failure of the State to address their transportation needs affects all of us, either directly or indirectly. Even in recognizing the overlap in population of some of these groups, approximately 50% of the population of Washington is in a group with “special transportation needs” and these groups are growing dramatically. While all the members of these groups do not require special transportation, they are in vulnerable population groups where minor changes in their lives can result in a significant loss of mobility and access.

Much of the transportation for persons with special transportation needs is provided by public transportation agencies and private non-profit agencies. Public transportation agencies serve areas where approximately 85% of Washington’s population lives. Fixed-route services carry 150 million trips per year with an operating cost of \$536 million (2002). Many of these riders are persons with special transportation needs. Door-to-door paratransit service required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provides over 4.5 million trips to disabled persons at a cost of \$99.8 million in 2002. Vanpool services operated by public transportation systems carry an additional 4.4 million trips per year.

Private non-profit agencies also provide significant numbers of transportation services to the special needs populations in areas not served by public transportation agencies or to population groups in areas covered geographically by public transits which are not adequately served by the public transportation system. This includes persons with special transportation needs in rural, suburban, and urban Washington. These community transportation providers are an integral part of delivering transportation services both inside and outside of a PTBA. Transit cannot be all things to all people.

Community transportation providers fill a unique niche, providing a safety net for people who would otherwise be isolated and essentially trapped in their homes.

Across the state there are private non-profit and private for-profit transportation providers. They are funded through grants, donations, endowments, private pay fares, and contracts with public agencies. These include taxi, cabulance and bus companies that operate as a for-profit business, and also non-profit agencies such as Hopelink, People For People, the Fremont Public Association, Northeast Rural Resources Development, and others that provide extensive transportation services to some of the states more vulnerable citizens.

Private and private non-profit agencies also provide most non-emergency medical service funded by the Medicaid system and most intercity bus service connecting rural and small communities in the state. In addition, there are community providers that do not offer transportation as a core business activity, but as a support to delivering their own services. They do this because lack of transportation is a barrier to accessing services. All over the state there are organizations with 1 to 5 vehicles providing transportation to their own clients. These include residential facilities, hospitals and medical centers, senior programs, veterans programs, low-income housing complexes, churches, child care facilities, colleges, community centers, and other community based organizations.

Community transportation providers provide a significant number of trips to persons with special transportation needs. They fill service gaps in areas served by public transportation systems and are the only source of transportation in many areas of the state. If not for the work of the community providers, transit systems would be facing a much higher demand for services, often in areas that it is economically inefficient to serve via transit.

The funding and responsibility for providing access and basic mobility to all citizens of Washington has traditionally been a partnership among local jurisdictions, the State of Washington, the federal government and human service agencies. The role of the federal government is well-defined and difficult to change in any significant manner. Local jurisdictions and agencies, particularly public transit agencies, have significantly increased their funding by increasing local option taxes. Outside of home-to-school transportation and Medicaid transportation funds, which are managed and distributed via a statewide Medicare transportation broker, the State of Washington provides only a very small amount of funding.

Local public transportation agencies provide over \$500 million, or 72.5%, of the funding to meet special transportation needs. This comes primarily from local, voter-approved sales tax devoted to public transportation agencies. This does not include over \$130 million in user fees that are also spent on transportation services. If only one-half of

the service is serving persons with special transportation needs, this would still be almost 60% of the total funding.

Unfortunately, non-profit transportation providers who provide a good percentage of special needs transportation have no sales tax revenue option, and in fact must rely primarily on bi-annual competitive grant funding as well as local communities that recognize the importance of special needs transportation and contribute to it. Resources available to these much-needed transportation resources are becoming increasingly scarce.

The federal government provides \$147 million, or 21% of the total, primarily through assistance from the Federal Transit Administration to public transportation agencies. The other major federal funding program is Medicaid providing \$22 million for non-emergency medical transportation. State funding is \$37 million—only 5.3% of the total. The major programs are Medicaid (63% of the State funds) and WSDOT Special Needs and Rural Mobility programs (\$15 million or 40% of the State funds). Other identifiable sources of special need funding total approximately \$9 million or 1.3% of available funds.

It is important to recognize that medical access for Medicaid recipients, nutrition access for frail seniors, adult day care access and rehabilitation access for the developmentally disabled are, under federal law, the responsibility of the state. Where public transit exists, the local public transit systems are meeting more than 50% of the State's obligation. In communities without public transportation or with gaps in service, community transportation providers are providing service with little state assistance.

Rural public transit systems have been particularly hard hit since the elimination of the MVET. Rural public transit ridership has fallen by over 40% since 1999 and the rural public transit network has shrunk dramatically. Although private non-profit agencies attempt to fill some gaps in intercity bus service connecting rural and small communities in the state, the funding to these agencies is on a biennial, competitive grant basis and it is neither sustainable funding nor sufficient to meet the needs. This loss of service has isolated many rural communities leaving residents with limited access to employment and health care. Many rural transit systems face economic and political situations where it has been impossible to raise the local option sales tax (failing agricultural, loss of aluminum smelters and competing needs for tax revenues). The historic partnership of the State and the localities is even more important in these rural communities where the ability for self-help is limited. The State needs to expand and provide predictable rural funding to allow the restoration of the most critical lost rural access.

Recommendation: The Role and Responsibility of the State of Washington in Providing Access to Basic Transportation for all Washington Citizens.

1. ***The State of Washington should recognize and declare a State interest in providing access for all citizens of the State of Washington.*** The issue of providing access and basic mobility should be addressed by providing funding where gaps exist and by partnering with local and federal governments, nonprofit agencies and human service agencies to improve and expand existing services.
2. ***The State of Washington should provide funding to address special transportation needs in every portion of the State. Most residents of Washington – an estimated 85% - reside in counties served by one of the State's 26 public transportation systems. However, residents in counties where only a portion of the county is in a transit agency's service area and who live outside of that area are often without transportation options. Also, there are many residents who live outside of these areas and depend on transportation services provided by private non-profit agencies or have no transportation service available. The State should provide funding that is sustainable, sufficient and that is distributed according to an allocation formula to be developed. The allocation would consist of three parts:***
 - ***A portion should flow directly to transit systems***
 - ***A second portion should go to non-profit transportation providers who meet certain criteria***
 - ***A third segment of funds should remain available through the WSDOT Public Rail and Transportation Division for competitive grants that will allow new, innovative and creative programs to be developed. This third piece will help Washington State remain a beacon of collaborative, innovative transportation solutions.***

The State of Washington should provide a minimum of \$50 million per year for this program.

3. ***The State of Washington should identify a network of intercity transportation necessary to ensure basic mobility for citizens in rural and small town Washington and provide funding to support these services. The withdrawal of Greyhound from a number of small communities in Washington threatens to further isolate residents of these communities without access to an automobile. The State should lead efforts to identify alternatives for maintaining some level of service to these communities.***

- 4. The State of Washington should adequately fund and strengthen the Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation (ACCT). The ACCT has made significant progress in elevating the issues of special needs transportation and coordination within the State and among state agencies. The Council has also initiated coordination efforts in a number of counties that have resulted in new partnerships and improved service. Funded demonstration programs have helped explore innovative approaches to meeting special transportation needs and to coordinating services. The ACCT should continue to receive funds to support these efforts.***
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AREA 9: BUILDING FUTURE VISIONS

What are the visions of transportation system futures – shared and unshared- that shape transportation planning to help create pathways to the future?

A vision of a future transportation system that includes a statewide network for strong public transportation systems is one that speaks to every citizen of the State of Washington. It is a vision of urban areas where citizens have transportation choices and where a balanced program of investments in roads, public transportation, pedestrian and bicycle facilities have created healthy, beautiful, and sustainable communities. It is a vision of a future where disabled and elderly residents throughout our state have access to medical care, food, family activities, and entertainment and where transportation is not a barrier to a full and happy life. It is a vision where our poorest citizens can reach childcare, education and training, and employment without having to pay transportation costs that prevents them meeting other basic needs of their families. It is a vision where all the children of our state can participate fully in their schools and their community. Most of all, it is a vision of a State where no citizen is isolated with little hope due to the lack of transportation.

The State of Washington should once again become a strong partner with local public transportation agencies, non-profit agencies, human service agencies, the federal government, local communities and others to provide a strong network of public transportation services to all parts and citizens of the State of Washington. Achieving the efficiency, environmental, social, and economic goals of the total transportation system cannot occur without a strong, well-funded public transportation system.